

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, MY
SUBJ: LIM KIT SIANG AFFAIR

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 3590

1. INTERESTING COMMENT ON ARREST OF LIM KIT SIANG
(REFTEL) APPEARED IN APRIL 29 EDITION OF MORNING
SINGAPORE DAILY STRAITS TIMES.

2. TEXT OF EDITORIAL FOLLOWS:

"THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE POLITICAL DILEMMA THE
DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (DAP) IS IN, WITH THE ARRESTS
OF ITS SECRETARY-GENERAL, MR. LIM KIT SIANG AND THE
EDITOR OF THE ROCKET, THE PARTY JOURNAL. IF THE TWO
LEADERS ARE FOUND GUILTY, IT MAY WELL BE A CRIPPLING
BLOW TO THE DAP, WHERE ITS PREPARATIONS FOR THE GENERAL
ELECTIONS ARE CONCERNED. THE ALLEGED OFFENSES ARE
SAID TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN 1976 AND THE TIMING OF
THE ARRESTS ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO LEAD TO CHARGES OF
HARASSMENT OF THE DAP BY THE RULING COALITION. IT IS
THE PREROGATIVE, OF COURSE, OF THE INCUMBENTS, TO
INDULGE IN SUCH TACTICS WHEN PLANNING ELECTORAL
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CONTESTS EVEN IF THEY APPEAR TO POLITICAL OPPONENTS
TO BE UNFAIR. YET THERE IS NO REAL NEED FOR THE
GOVERNMENT TO RESORT TO SUCH STEPS, THERE BEING NO
THREAT WHATSOEVER FROM THIS QUARTER TO THE RULING
GROUP.

"THE DAP IS REPORTEDLY CONSIDERING ITS FUTURE;
THE QUESTION IS WHETHER TO FOLD UP, DISSOLVE ITSELF,

OR TO BOYCOTT THE POLLS. NEXT WEEK THE PARTY'S
CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL CONVENE A SPECIAL
CONGRESS TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. THE OPTIONS APPEAR
NOT TO BE AS NARROW AS THOSE PERCEIVED BY THE DAP,
BUT THE TOP LEADERS PROBABLY RULED OUT CONTESTING THE
BALLOT SO AS NOT TO GIVE THE NATIONAL FRONT THE
SATISFACTION OF TROUNCING THEM. NEVERTHELESS, IF THE
DAP IS PUT OUT, OR IF IT VOLUNTARILY GOES INTO LIQUI-
DATION, PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN MALAYSIA MAY BE
THE POORER FOR IT. AS THE DAP'S DEPUTY SECRETARY-
GENERAL HAS SAID, "IF THE DAP DOES NOT EXIST, IT
DOESN'T MEAN THAT THE PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS WILL ALSO
CEASE TO EXIST.' IN FACT, THE DISSOLUTION OF THE
PARTY WILL ALLOW OTHERS TO CHAMPION THE CAUSES OF THE
DISAFFECTED, AND IT IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN THAT THEY
WILL FOLLOW THE CONSTITUTIONAL PATH. BETTER HALF A
SAFETY VALVE (IN THE FORM OF THE DAP), THAN NONE."

3. COMMENT: THE TONE OF THE EDITORIAL IS STRIKING;
ONE WOULD IMAGINE THAT IT WAS WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY
WHERE OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE ACTIVE AND THRIVING,
WHICH IS NOT THE CASE HERE (ALTHOUGH LESS BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT
OPPRESSION THAN THEIR OWN INEPTITUDE). THE IRONY WILL NOT BE
MISSED BY MALAYSIAN READERS. ALSO INTERESTING IS
THAT THE EDITORIAL, WHILE IMPLYING THAT THE ARRESTS
ARE AN UNFAIR ELECTION TACTIC, PRINCIPALLY OBJECTS
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TO THEM ON GROUNDS THAT THEY WERE NOT NECESSARY
SINCE THE DAP POSED "NO THREAT WHATSOEVER."
HOLDRIDGE

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